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SUBJECT: 12/21/04 MEDIA REACTION ON NEWS OF POTUS VISIT

DAILY SME, PAGE 1: "Bush and Putin are coming to Bratislava" reads the headline above photos of Presidents Bush and Putin: In February, Bratislava will become the center of the world for one day, PM Mikulas Dzurinda announced, noting that on February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet his US counterpart George Bush in Bratislava. "It will be a big day for the Slovak people and the Slovak nation, and allow me to express some sentiment, also for me personally," said PM Dzurinda, remarking on his personal relationship with President Bush, "I very honestly appreciate the friendship I feel on his part." On PAGE 2: The daily suggests that for Slovakia, organizing such a meeting will be a great challenge, adding that President Bush will visit Europe in order to fix mutually complicated relations with the continent. Head of the unit for protecting state officials Jan Packa said that measures Bratislava has never seen before will be taken. On PAGE 2 SME also prints a summary of previous summits between the Russian and US presidents, and features Dzurinda's comment that the summit is "a sign of our balanced politics" and puts an end to disinformation spread by the opposition saying that Dzurinda turned Slovakia into an island of US influence.

DAILY PRAVDA, PAGE 1: "Putin and Bush are going to meet in Bratislava": The daily reports on the planned summit between US President George Bush and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

PAGE 6: "Putin and Bush are going to meet in Bratislava" a title above a picture of Bush and Putin from their last meeting in Chile in November 2004: "Vladimir Putin is going to meet with George Bush in the capital of Slovakia" - said a spokesperson from Kremel Alexej Gromov according to agency ITAR TASS. Bush will fly in for two days on February 23. This day will be considered as official visit to Slovakia. The press section of the Russian Embassy said "at this moment we have no information". Spokesperson of the Slovak Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, Juraj Tomaga: "I am not going to comment on this". As a first official commenting on this information, Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Kukan said: "It is a signal of appreciation and trust that we can organize this kind of meeting". According to the Russian news portal Bratislava was chosen during the summit in Chile in November. Bush is also supposed to meet Putin in May in Moscow to celebrate 60th anniversary of the Nazi defeat.

PAGE 10: "Honor for Slovakia" - a byliner by Miroslav Caplovic comments on the upcoming summit of bosses from the White House and Kremlin. Why did they choose Bratislava? George Bush considers Slovakia as his faithful ally, but he has never stopped here on his way to Europe. It is about time to see his NATO newcomer. Also Vladimir Putin has had his invitation from Gasparovic's predecessor Rudolf Schuster on his desk for a long time. Their visits belong to visits requiring the highest security so we think that we have a good reputation in this regard. Slovakia managed to secure the pope and even the NATO Summit took place without massive protests.

DAILY NARODNA OBRODA, PAGE 1: "Bush and Putin are going to meet in Bratislava in February": President Ivan Gasparovic says that US President George Bush will not come to Bratislava because of Russian President Vladimir Putin, but because Slovakia is a country with the right reactions to international issues. He considers it important that both state officials have accepted Slovakia's invitation. The daily quotes Charge d'Affaires Scott Thayer as saying that President Bush comes to Bratislava as a friend of Slovakia. PAGE 2: "Bratislava is neutral": Sarah E. Mendelson of the American Center for Strategic and International Studies said that American and Russian representatives chose Bratislava because it is a neutral place for the meeting. "They probably were seeking something between the US and Russia. It could not have been the Baltic countries or Poland and certainly not Ukraine or

Belarus," she said. Prague would have evoked memories of 1968.

DAILY NOVY CAS, PAGE 1 and 4:"Putin and Bush are heading to Bratislava!" - a title with picture of Bush and Putin: The daily brings information on the planned February 24 summit. The subject of their meeting should be mostly Ukraine that is going through their velvet revolution at the moment. Both parties agreed on the meeting place and both of them are going to visit Slovakia for the first time.

DAILY HOSPODARSKE NOVINY, PAGE 1 and 4:"Bush and Putin in Bratislava" a title above a small picture of Bush and Putin: The upcoming meeting of Russian President Vladimir Putin and American President George W. Bush will be on February 24 in Bratislava - said the press section of the Russian presidential office according to agency AFP. Putin will be in Bratislava during that time for an official visit. Bush will visit Slovakia on his way through European countries where he is going to straighten up relations with allies.

SLOVAK RADIO, in the news program Radio Journal announced that the White House would confirm today President Bush's visit to Bratislava in February next year where the meeting with Russian President Putin will take place.

TV MARKIZA, TV News: In February next year a Russian-US summit will take place in Bratislava. We were first informed about this event by the Russian side, then Eduard Kukan (Minister of Foreign Affairs) confirmed it and then the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia. This will be the first visit of a US president to Slovakia. The summit will take place on Feb 24, but Bush may arrive on the 23rd. During his trip to Europe he will visit Berlin and Brussels too. This Russian - U.S summit is by far the most important political event that has ever taken place in Slovakia. PM Mikulas Dzurinda: This bilateral meeting is taking place in our country, this is a big day for us, we are happy. Charge d'Affaires, Scott Thayer: President Bush will come as a friend of Slovakia and PM. Slovak President, Ivan Gasparovic: It means so much for us, also from the economic point of view, it's the way to show trust to our country.

SLOVAK TV: In February Putin and Bush are meeting in Bratislava, as announced by the Kremlin. This is the first visit of a US President to our country. Politicians agreed on this meeting in Bratislava ten days ago. Bush will also visit Belgium and Germany. PM Mikulas Dzurinda: This is wonderful for Slovakia to participate in bilateral talks and to be a host country of such an event. Slovak President, Ivan Gasparovic: This confirms that we are a trustworthy country.

TV TA3: US President Bush will come February 23-24, as announced by PM and Putin's office. PM Dzurinda: This is so wonderful for Slovakia that it will participate in bilateral talks and be a host country of such an event. It also shows the great relationship between US and Slovakia. Slovak President: President Bush is coming primarily to visit Slovakia. Slovak MFA Eduard Kukan, President: The Russian - US summit was not our initiative. Before they met in Slovenia, so this is a natural process; they choose neutral countries.

THAYER

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